

Message Text

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73

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-08 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

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R 261320Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY SANAA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4513

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABA

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 2227

KUWAIT PASS DOHA AND MUSCAT

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, YE

SUBJECT: REPLACEMENT OF HODEIDA GOVERNOR SINAN ABU LUHUM

REF: SANAA 2209

SUMMARY: HAMDI, IN SURPRISE MOVE, HAS REPLACED SINAN ABU LUHUM AS HODEIDA GOVERNOR, WEAKENING HIS MAJOR POLITICAL OPPONENT AND RE-ASSERTING YARG CONTROL OVER PROVINCE AND PORT REVENUES.

1. SANAA RADIO ON AFTERNOON OCTOBER 24 ANNOUNCED APPOINTMENT OF

LTC ALI AL-RUBAIDI, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF MINFIN INCOME TAX DEPT., AS GOVERNOR OF HODEIDA. RUBAIDI IS CONSIDERED A WEAK
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PERSONALITY WHO REACHED HIS PEAK IN EARLY DAYS OF REPUBLIC

WHEN HE SERVED AS CHIEF OF STAFF AND DEPTUY COMMANDER OF ARMED FORCES. HE WAS ALSO BRIEFLY MININT IN SHORT-LIVED 1970 KHURSHAMI CABINET. HE HAS NO INDEPENDENT POLITICAL BASE.

2. NO MENTION MADE PUBLICLY OF FORMER GOVERNOR SINAN ABU LUHUM, ONE OF MOST POWERFUL POLITICAL FIGURES IN COUNTRY WHO RAN HODEIDA PROVINCE AS PERSONAL FEUDAL PRINCIPALITY. ABU LUHUM SUBMITTED PRO FORMA RESIGNATION JUST BEFORE JUNE 13 MILITARY TAKEOVER AND IMMEDIATELY BEGAN PRESSURING COMMAND COUNCIL CHAIRMAN HAMDI TO LET HIM RETURN SINCE CONTROL OF PORT REVENUES WERE HIS MAJOR SOURCE OF INCOME. HAMDI, WHILE AVOIDING CONFRONTATION, RESISTED REQUEST. IN EARLY JULY (SANAA 1385), NAME OF ACTING GOVERNOR WAS ACTUALLY SENT TO RADIO STATION, BUT WAS WITHDRAWN BECAUSE OF PRESSURE FROM ABU LUHUM. FINALLY IN MID-SEPTEMBER ABU LUHUM WAS ALLOWED TO RETURN TO HODEIDA AND WAS REFERRED TO BY MEDIA AS GOVERNOR. HE WAS NEVER OFFICIALLY REINSTATED, HOWEVER, SITUATION WHICH WEAKENED HIS AUTHORITY IN PROVINCE. HAMDI NOW SEEMS TO BE TAKING POSITION THAT ABU LUHUM WAS ONLY ACTING GOVERNOR SINCE WITHDRAWAL HIS JUNE RESIGNATION NEVER OFFICIALLY NOTED BY YARG.

3. ABU LUHUM'S POLITICAL OPPONENTS ARE DELIGHTED BY THIS DEVELOPMENT WHICH THEY SEE AS CLEAR PROOF HAMDI'S ABILITY TO WAIT FOR RIGHT MOMENT AND STRIKE HARD. RIGHT MOMENT IN THIS CASE WAS RETURN OF CONSTITUTION AND CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY AND REMOVAL OF TWO ABU LUHUMS FROM COMMAND COUNCIL ON OCT 23 (SANAA 2209). ACCORDING TO MINSTATE AHMAD SA'ID A LEADING ABU LUHUM FOE, HAMDI ANNOUNCED HIS DECISION DURING OCT 23 EVENING MEETING OF NEW COMMAND COUNCIL AND FORCED PRIMIN AL-AYNI, ABU LUHUM'S BROTHER-IN-LAW, TO SIGN DECREE APPOINTING RUBAIDI. ALTHOUGH AL-AYNI AND LTC DIRHAM ABU LUHUM, TAIZ MILITARY COMMANDER, REPORTEDLY OPPOSED DECISION IN HEATED ARGUMENT, POTENTIAL ABU LUHUM SUPPORTERS, DEP. CIC LTC MUJAHID ABU SHAWARIB, AND MININT LTC YAHYA AL-MUTAWAKKIL, SAT ON THEIR HANDS RATHER THAN OPPOSE HAMDI.

4. SHAIKH SINAN DEPARTED ON MORNING OCT 25 WITH HAMDI AS
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MEMBER YARG DELEGATION TO RABAT SUMMIT. PRIOR TO DEPARTURE HE WAS SPREADING RUMOR THAT HE HAD RESIGNED VOLUNTARILY AND WANTED TO BECOME AMBASSADOR IN ABU DHABI. LETTER POSSIBILITY CONFIRMED TO ME BY MINSTATE SA'ID AND SAG MABASSADOR SUDAIRI WHO ACTED VERY PLEASED WITH ABU LUHUM'S REMOVAL. POSSIBILITY EXISTS IN YAR POLITICAL SYSTEM THAT ABU LUHUM WILL BE COMPENSATED WITH NEW POST BUT IT MOST UNLIKELY THAT IT WILL BE POSITION OF REAL POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL POWER SUCH

AS GOVERNORSHIP OF HODEIDA.

5. YARG SHOULD ALSO REALIZE SOME SIGNIFICANT GAINS IN ITS
AUTHORITY BY REPLACEMENT ABU LUHUM WITH RUBAIDI. FOR FIRST TIME
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE CONTROL OVER A MAJOR SOURCE
OF INCOME FROM WHICH IT PREVIOUSLY ONLY RECEIVED A SMALL
SHARE. ALSO FOR FIRST TIME SINCE ABU LUHUM'S APPOINTMENT
IN 1968 WILL YAR CENTRAL GOVERNMENT HAVE EFFECTIVE
AUTHORITY IN ONE OF ITS MOST IMPORTANT PROVINCES.
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